
Press Release

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SCAG Conference to Highlight the Power of Open Data, Featuring PBS Host Dr. Talithia Williams

Indian Wells, Calif. – More than 850 civic leaders from throughout Southern California are convening Wednesday through Friday for an annual conference of the region's cities and counties, which will share strategies for accelerating innovation and building a smarter, more connected region.

The 53rd Annual Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) Regional Conference and General Assembly will include a keynote address from Dr. Talithia Williams on Thursday, May 3. The big data expert, television host and Professor of Statistics and Math at Harvey Mudd College will illuminate the transformative power of data-based problem-solving. As a cohost of the PBS series NOVA Wonders, and in her popular TED Talk, "Own Your Body's Data", Dr. Talithia Williams takes sophisticated numerical concepts and makes them understandable to a wide audience.

Facilitating partnerships and data-sharing to address key regional issues will be a major theme of the 2018 conference, titled "Southern California at a Crossroads." An invitation-only "Future Communities Forum" on Wednesday, May 2 will showcase how technology and open data are being used to solve common challenges. The forum includes panel discussions with experts and thought leaders from Amazon, Sidewalk Labs and IBI Group, as well as local, national and international data experts.

"This is a time of transition and change for the region, in terms of demographics, technology, transportation and more," said SCAG President Margaret Finlay, a Duarte City Council member. "Bringing together experts and leaders from across Southern California allows us to share knowledge and move region-wide solutions forward."

During her term as President, Finlay oversaw the development of a SCAG initiative to build capacity at the local level for implementing smart technologies across Southern California. SCAG, the nation's largest metropolitan planning organization, represents 191 cities, six counties and more than 18 million people. As the regional data center of the U.S. Census Bureau, SCAG is uniquely positioned to lead local governments forward in adapting to the Big Data revolution.

Panel sessions scheduled for Thursday and Friday will address major opportunities and challenges for the region, including harnessing new transportation technologies, planning for the retail revolution, building resilience for natural disasters and finding long-term transportation funding solutions.

The 2018 Regional Conference and General Assembly wraps up on Friday, May 4. Full details on the conference program are available online: <http://scag.ca.gov/ga2018>

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About SCAG

SCAG is the nation's largest metropolitan planning organization, representing six counties, 191 cities and more than 18 million residents. SCAG undertakes a variety of planning and policy initiatives to plan for a livable and sustainable Southern California now and in the future. For more information about SCAG's regional efforts, please visit www.scag.ca.gov.